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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Friday, July 17, 2009

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Dear Physician,

The American Medical Association has endorsed legislation pending before the House of Representatives, H.R. 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act. Based upon my discussions with local physicians in our community over the past few months, you may be as surprised as I was to hear of the AMA's endorsement. I encourage you to join me in opposing the AMA's decision and this misguided legislation.

Just last month, Dr. Nancy Nielsen, president of the AMA, said of the association, "We absolutely oppose government control of health care decisions or mandatory physician participation in any insurance plan." Yet, the bill the AMA endorsed today remains fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with this principle.

This legislation will radically and permanently eviscerate the relationship you have built with your patients by empowering a government juggernaut to make critical care decisions that currently rest solely where they should: in the hands of doctors and patients. The vast majority of Americans will be subject to government decisions, based on the recommendations of an appointed board, which define the "covered treatments and items and services within benefit packages."

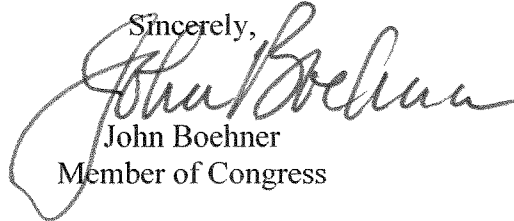
H.R. 3200 also retains provisions to force patients onto a government-run plan, which an independent research firm calculates will forcibly ensnare 114 million Americans currently participating in employer-sponsored coverage. Just as providers should not be forced to participate in any insurance plan, so, too, should Americans be able to choose the coverage that best fits their needs.

The new government plan will also exacerbate provider payment challenges which have served as a major impediment to patient access to appropriate medical treatment. The legislation sets strict reimbursement rates equal to Medicare that are 20 percent below those afforded providers by private plans. This unsustainable structure will force private plans to absorb underpayments elsewhere in the system, raising the average cost of private coverage for a family of four to rise by \$4,000, and starve medical practices of the necessary resources to provide quality care.

In addition, this legislation fails to address the urgent need for medical liability reform. National attention to this issue is essential to reduce costly defensive medicine practices employed by physicians as a last line of defense against overzealous trial lawyers.

We must reform our health care system to control costs and strive toward universal access to affordable care, but without stripping medical providers of power to decide appropriate courses of treatment or handing the reigns of our health care system to a bureaucratic machine geared toward arbitrary decision making instead of patient well-being. At a time when our health care system is facing an acute crisis, we cannot afford to allow haste to compromise our principles. I encourage you to disavow the AMA's endorsement of this legislation and join me in working to enact health care reform that will serve all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Boehner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

John Boehner
Member of Congress